Case Study: Potential Child Abuse

CASE STUDY NOTICE
The following case study is designed to be instructive of the issues that should generally be addressed in the situation described; they are not an exhaustive list of actions for every similar situation faced by Extension employees. The particular facts of the situation will always dictate the appropriate response. Specific questions related to a particular fact pattern should be discussed with the proper Extension administrator(s).

SITUATION:

You are an Extension Agent responsible for the County Leadership Camp. The camp is for young people between the ages of 12 to 16 and is staffed by teen counselors between the ages of 17 and 19. On the first night of camp, you are told that one of the male campers, age 12, has a lot of bruises on his back. One of the male counselors, age 17, confirms this information to you after the camper showed the bruises to others in his cabin. The camper explains to others in his cabin that he got the bruises by falling down the steps at his house.

Instructions: Using the above situation, consider and discuss the following questions:
1. When confronted with the information presented in the scenario, how might you respond?
2. Who should be involved in the decision-making process concerning this situation?
3. How do you address the counselor who brought the situation to your attention?
4. How do you address the situation with the child’s parent/guardian?

Immediate response:
1. Immediately call Child Protective Services Division and your immediate supervisor to inform them of the situation.
2. Start documenting the situation, including a time-line and the information presented to you. With another adult witness present, talk with the teen counselor about the confidentiality of the case and ask the counselor to document what he heard and witnessed.
3. Do not discuss the matter with the parents; refer all inquiries to Child Protective Services.

Future solutions to situation:
• There was nothing prior to this incident that could have been done by Texas AgriLife Extension Service employees to change the situation.
• Dealt with all future incidents on a case by case basis, remembering that it is our legal obligation as a youth development agency to contact Child Protective Services Division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in the event of suspected child abuse.